

## Against the Grain

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# Blurring Lines--Innovation in Open Access Publishing

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stowed away before I get back from the office. If I'm lucky, she'll neatly stack my boxes in my little office off the front door. If unlucky, boxes will be strewn around the porch or stacked like a Leaning Tower of Pisa next to a planter where we grow dead plants.

It's unlucky for me because it's an iconic statement of my excess. All those **Amazon** boxes, each one of them charged to our overheated Amex card. Every one of them, no doubt, a conspicuous consumption. Not in **Veblen's** sense of keeping up with the Joneses' type behavioral economics. No, more precisely, **Dennis'** obsession with easily ordered and purchased **Amazon** books.

Yes, I confess my wife is right and so are you, dear reader, if you sense how wrong this may or could be.


There is method in my madness. It's obsessive, yes, to **Amazon** One-Click for books. But how can I, a mere librarian, resist buying the library books that were on my reading as a kid?

Yes, I've discovered as perhaps some of you have that our library books are going for as little as one cent a book. Of course, shipping, handling, and taxes add another three or four dollars. And some used bookstores don't figure into **Amazon Prime** which in the **Amazon** used trade business doesn't save you shipping but does speed up shipping.

So I'm buying back a library, my library, from your libraries, book by book. The books show library wear and my shelves now seem, to the noticing eye, as lifted from a public library here, a school library there, a defunct school of higher education.

I just received a great library rebound copy of **John Cheever's** exquisite short story collection, *Some People, Places, and Things that Will not Appear in My Next Novel*. This is not one of **Cheever's** best or remunerative books. Yet it is memorable to me and as it has been overlooked by its publisher as a reissue; at three bucks, it's a steal. In my home, it's shelved alongside the **Library of America's** edition of **Cheever's** well-known novels — the **Wapshot** novels and **Falconer**. I love it as the library that tossed it didn't. Love the penny price. Like a penny stock it has its own cheap charm.

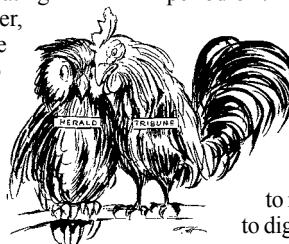
Why? I won't make fun of how we are dumping our intellectual property probably not even at fire sale prices. Besides the dumpers seem to be public libraries and school libraries — so read the leftover markings of ownership, call number, and date stamps. My penny book stocks from **Amazon** are faded, blurred, oddly marked as if weeded in haste or tossed because a well-worn book, is well...

My library suppliers are probably strapped for space and they've found space in the jettisoning of the **Cheever's**, **Bellow's**, and **Updike's**. We'll let **Nicholson Baker** find the humor and irony in this — although even **Nick** has moved on from libraries, librarians, and our shred, shrink-wrap, shirk, and high-density shelving behavior. Our loss is my gain. Sort of. 

## Blurring Lines — Innovation in Open Access Publishing

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Open access publishing is a frontier, but it is a frontier that is too often constrained by discussions based in activist or anti-market views about information distribution and the role of government. I prefer to view open access as a laboratory for innovation. I agree government-funded research should be widely and easily accessible, but I don't believe there is one simple way forward. Instead I embrace those entities and people that are innovating new open access models. Further, the models need to move more rapidly beyond journals and into monographs, archives and other digital items. I believe open access should be engaged as a business model; the end result being more and better types of content freely available to students and researchers as a result of entrepreneurialism, innovation and the very best of governmental and private sector thinking coming to bear on the opportunity. In this column I will describe a recent initiative to bring open access to a new **Alexander Street** anthropology archive and then introduce recent efforts in open access monograph and journal publishing from the **University of California Press** and **Ubiquity Press**.



### Open Access Archives

At **Alexander Street** we have long seen making silent voices heard a central component of our mission. In the field of anthropology we know that the seminal ethnographies of the twentieth century that defined the discipline are underpinned by an enormous volume of un-published and un-digitized field notes, photos and other forms of ephemera. Our standard business practice has been to select such un-digitized content and then to digitize, index and make salable; but the sheer volume of content in the corpus of twentieth century ethnography makes this nearly impossible, thus our exploration into open access alternatives. When we scanned the landscape of open access offerings in archives we found the vast majority to be government or institution-funded; the stand-out exception being the offerings of **Reveal Digital**, such as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee Digital Archive, 1960-1969. **Reveal Digital** uses a sales threshold approach that is based on establishing a revenue target after which the archive becomes open to all. This, of course, relies on the largesse and goodwill of the well-funded and/or philanthropic to bring important archives open to the world.

At **Alexander Street**, we are bringing forth a new open access model for archive publication. Our new collection, *Anthropological*

*Fieldwork Online*, will bring open access archival content to the world by merging “for fee” and “for free” content into a single offering. Based on the preference of the many archives we are working with to digitize their field notes of anthropologists such as **Victor Turner**, **Margaret Mead**, and **Bronislaw Malinowski**, we will present three alternatives side-by-side in one offering: for fee (traditional purchase or subscription), hybrid (for fee for a period of three to seven years and then freely open) and sponsored open access on publication. We will return 10% of the “for fee” revenue we generate to digitizing and delivering content open access, and we are encouraging the archives delivering content for fee to return a percentage of their royalty to digitizing and delivering open access content. From this pool of monies we will prioritize and digitize the archival content that the trustees want open access on publication and never salable. Our open access model builds on the fundamental proposition that content owners and trustees of archives have different objectives, and some have varying levels of need to generate revenues to sustain their operations. *Anthropological Fieldwork Online* will represent these great previously unpublished ethnographic works in a single platform with some content freely available on launch (and this will be ever growing), some content perpetually behind a paywall and some content that will begin behind a paywall but migrate to freely available in five and seven years.

### Open Access Monographs

The **University of California Press** is bringing new thinking to the publishing of open access scholarly monographs. The Article Processing Charge (APC model), while the standard for STEM journal publishing, has not yet taken deep roots in the scholarly monograph space; this is particularly true in the humanities and social sciences. And monograph publishing, in general, struggles in maintaining its prestige and legitimacy when it veers from its standard print format. *Luminos*, the **UC Press** OA initiative for monograph publishing, seeks to address these many concerns by focusing on quality assurance through the use of the same review process in place for their print monographs and by launching with several high-profile authors among the first published. But the real innovation in the *Luminos* model is the community-funding approach to bringing born-digital, open access monographs to life. By sharing the costs of publication across the publisher, the many contributing and sponsoring libraries and minor APCs (in the range of a typical STEM

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#### Endnotes

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acquisitions of eBooks. There are three core principles: unlimited simultaneous users, no DRM, and irrevocable perpetual access and archival rights. Unfortunately, **Chuck** will not be in Charleston this year, but there are many key people involved in this initiative. Be sure and attend the program at the **Charleston Conference** on Friday, November 6, 12:45-2:00 at the **Courtyard Marriott**. <https://2015charlestonconference.sched.org>

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journal article, i.e., \$7500), the press brings together a group of likeminded stakeholders to ensure the viability of the program. And for authors who cannot afford the APC, the press will offer assistance in the form of sponsorship derived from its various revenue streams around the Luminos model. The press describes the model as a starting point and expects that funding mechanisms will shift and evolve over time, but the out-of-the-gate offering is an important step for open access publishing.

#### Open Access Journals

I began this column by stating, among other things, that the conversation around open access needs to move aggressively beyond journals into monographs, archives and other digital items. So it may seem odd that I finish by highlighting the efforts of **Ubiquity Press**; a decidedly journal-oriented open access publisher. But **Ubiquity Press** is so much more. **Brian Hole** founded **Ubiquity Press** to address the high APC costs to publish open access and to ensure that coverage was better extended into the humanities and social sciences. With APC as low as \$450 for a journal article and \$4500

for a monograph, the model is clearly addressing cost. But the innovation **Ubiquity Press** is bringing to open access is with its platform that allows for the publication of the aforementioned "other digital items." Open access will eventually extend to the datasets that inform the scholarly journal articles and monographs (and I write this as an erstwhile scholar fully aware of the currency of primary data generated by the researcher through blood, sweat and tears), and the **Ubiquity Press** platform allow for the open delivery of data, software, hardware, bioresources, etc. **Ubiquity Press** sees this platform as its main innovation and is making it available to university presses so that university-based publishing may continue to rise in importance beyond monographs.

#### Summary

Demand-driven models (the subject of my last column) and open access publishing have been the two most fertile grounds of innovation in the library services space over the last ten years (opinion of course!). Thinking about how these two trend lines evolve and which people, institutions and companies will push them forward is top of mind for me. Come see our plenary session at the **Charleston Conference** on Open Access and let me know what you think will happen in OA and DDA. 🍷

**Last and far from least – tada! Matthew Ismail, Tom Gilson, and I** are beginning work on a small book series called the "**Short and Sweet series**." We envision these as short monographs 25-50 pages focusing on cutting-edge topics of interest to practicing information professionals, administrators in libraries, CEOs in universities or businesses, consultants, and the like. **Short and Sweet** must be: easy-to-read, understandable, and practically applicable. The tone is for the general reader not the academic quagmire

in too much detail. Volumes already accepted for the series include such topics as Reading in a Digital Age, Entrepreneurial Approaches to Library Transformation, Marketing and Consumer Behavior in Libraries, Peer Review in a Digital Age, and Entrepreneurship in the Realm of Libraries and Scholarly Communication. If you would be interested in learning more about this series, please contact **Matthew Ismail** at [<matthew.ismail@icloud.com>](mailto:<matthew.ismail@icloud.com>). 🍷

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